



### Queens Birthday trips

#### Hattah Lakes pack-carry

Located near Ouyen in the Mallee region of northwest Victoria, Hattah Lakes was a popular walk for much of the 1980's and 90's, but surprisingly hasn't been visited by YHA Bushwalking this century. Ken Sussex and Bruce Meincke are offering some pack carry options that feature camping on the Murray River as well as by one of the lakes themselves. The country is fairly flat, but the lakes, red gums and birdlife make it scenic. The downside is the need to carry water for one to two nights, as that from the river or lakes isn't drinkable, even after filtering.

Enquiries: Ken 9495 1350.

#### Grampians Base Camp

Sharon and Rafal are running a base-camp at the Staplyton Campground in Northern Grampians. Spectacular views are sure to be the highlight of this adventure.

On Saturday morning 7th June, the walk starts at 10am from the Staplyton Campground; it is a circuit track and graded medium.

The track gradually changes from flat and sandy to rock hopping. There will be minor rock climbing involved as this area contains many rocky crags and broad rock faces. Drops of a few metres in between rocks in some parts are also expected. The walk passes Bird Rock, Taipan Wall and many fascinating rock formations.

Reaching Mt Staplyton can present challenges; there will be a few tight squeezes between rocks as you ascend the diagonal cliff face. This section can be tricky, so take care walking your way through. There will be a reward at the top.



Half way down the track, a huge overhanging orange wall offers a stunning view to the whole valley (shown in photo above).

*continued back page*



New Years Eve 2007: (l-r) Paul, Chris, Sandra, Genevieve and Stephen at the summit of Mt Scorpio, on SW Tasmania's Western Arthur range, with Promontory Lake in the background.

See pages 7-9 for the full story of this epic walk (photo: Chris Wiltshire)

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### **New Committee**

The AGM on April 7th resulted in a few departures and new faces on the YHA Bushwalking committee. Moving on after nearly a decade of service is Ron Bell, whilst a relocation to Sydney has forced the resignation of Martin Cousins after a short but valuable period as Sunday Walks Secretary. Martin's role has been taken over by Hooi-Soon Khoo (without managing to relinquish his other position as Secretary). Carrying on their excellent work for a third year are Cynthia Bell (Treasurer) and Paul Gottlieb (Weekend Walks-Sec).

Joining the committee for the first time are Tamie Dick, Tom Lun and Rafal Rutkowski, whilst rejoining after a couple of decades in the "wilderness" (where else would he go?) is Bruce Meincke. Sarah has volunteered to coordinate the Social Events, whilst Tamie will assist Jane Bateson with Clubnight organisation and Bruce has become the club's Statistician.

**YHA BUSHWALKING COMMITTEE  
2008/09**

President	David Sisson
Secretary/Website	Hooi-Soon Khoo
Treasurer	Cynthia Bell
Walks Sec. (Weekends)	Paul Gottliebson
Walks Sec (Sundays)	Hooi-Soon Khoo
Clubnight Coordinators	Jane Bateson Tamie Dick
Social Secretary	Sarah Kim
Search & Rescue Rep	Simon Walliss
General committee	Tom Lun Bruce Meincke Rafal Rutkowski Andrew Stevenson Ken Sussex

Yeti Editor (non-committee) Stephen Smith

**CONTRIBUTIONS TO YETI**

These articles don't write themselves y' know, nor are they all plagiarised from the internet (well some of them aren't anyway). If you've enjoyed yourself on one or two YHA trips or have some thoughts about bushwalking which you'd like to share, then here's your opportunity to do so. Find a spare moment, jot them down then email them to [yhabush@bigpond.com](mailto:yhabush@bigpond.com)

Deadline for the next issue is Sept 1<sup>st</sup> 2008.

**YETI ONLINE**

"Yeti" has its own website [www.yhabush.org.au/Yeti](http://www.yhabush.org.au/Yeti) containing an online version of the latest issue as well as archived articles from past editions. The web versions are well worth visiting, as they often include additional photographs not able to be included in the print version for reasons of space, as well as superior reproduction.

**TRIP LEADERS**

Take advantage of the opportunity to promote your upcoming trips in YETI with a more detailed description than space in the programme allows. Please contact the editor with the details.

**YHA ACTIVITIES CLUBNIGHT**

Is held on Monday nights at the Jasper Hotel (formerly YWCA) building, 1<sup>st</sup> floor 489 Elizabeth Street in the city, from 8pm to approx. 9:30pm. Special events start at 8.15pm sharp, everybody welcome.

**ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER**

If you recognise an article in this newsletter it is probably because it has been plagiarised from another source. This is the only way we can bring you this newsletter. YETI makes no apology for any offence caused.

**YETI THANKS**

The following contributors to this issue:

- Brad Aitken
- Genevieve Avery
- Ron Bell
- Les Gamel
- Tom Lun
- Chris Marney
- Sharon Sainq
- David Sisson
- Ken Sussex
- Sing Wong
- Robert Yuen

**In Brief**

**Photo Competitions**

Both Bushwalking Victoria (BWV) and the Victorian High Country Huts Association (VHCHA) have photo competitions for their 2009 calendars. YHA Bushwalking is affiliated with both bodies, so our members are eligible to enter both contests. The only prizes are copies of the calendar and a warm inner glow.

The rules for both competitions are fairly similar, with the main feature of the photos to be a natural place or a hut respectively. All photos must be taken in Victoria and should have a minimum resolution of 5 megapixels. Both contests close on 30th June. An entry form with instructions for the BWV competition is available from the online Yeti [www.yhabush.org.au/Yeti/Autwin08/Calendar\\_photo\\_entry.pdf](http://www.yhabush.org.au/Yeti/Autwin08/Calendar_photo_entry.pdf). A copy of the VHCHA form can be obtained from David Sisson (9380 8126).

A maximum of 3 JPEG photos for the Bushwalking Victoria calendar can be submitted. The VHCHA allows you to submit up to 12 photos (but only one per area) in TIFF, JPEG or even old fashioned prints from films. Write the location, your name and phone number on the CD's and the back of prints. You should mention that you are a member of YHA Bushwalking Club.

**New John Chapman guidebooks**

The latest (5<sup>th</sup>) edition of John Chapman's "South West Tasmania" guidebook and the brand new "Larapinta Trail" are due to be released in June 2008. Recommended retail prices are \$37.50 and \$29.95 respectively, however these are available at pre-publication special prices of \$32 and \$25 for orders received before the first week of June. Orders should be sent to John Chapman, PO Box 5042, Laburnum, Victoria 3130, or refer to John's website <http://www.john.chapman.name/> for further details.

**Rebuilt Huts**

Craigs Hut and Bluff Hut have both been rebuilt this past summer, following their destruction in the December 2006 bushfires. Lovicks Hut was also being rebuilt when a YHA Bushwalking group camped nearby on the Australia Day weekend, although progress seemed a lot less urgent than the first two huts.

**Tamboritha Road reopens**

Amazingly, considering sections of it were almost washed away by last year's two Gippsland floods, the Tamboritha road from Licola has reopened well ahead of original expectations, although it still will be a while time before it is restored to its former condition. Access to areas such as Mt Reynard, Bryces Gorge, Lake Tali Karng is available, however there are many sections with speed limits of 20 or 40km due to the very narrow and rough surface.

**Lake Tali Karng camping to be phased out**

Another casualty of last year's floods was the toilet facility at Lake Tali Karng. There are no plans to replace it, and unfortunately the popularity of this sensitive area attracts a large number of campers with little inclination as to basic bush hygiene; even with just a handful of people there recently, a party from YHA Bushwalking had the misfortune to witness some very unsanitary behaviour. It comes as no surprise therefore that Parks Victoria plan to phase out camping at this location. Anyone wishing to visit it will have to camp either at the the top of Gilleos track or further on towards the Valley of Destruction (once that track reopens).

It is sad to lose overnight access to a beautiful location such as this, but the necessity of this course of action is recognised and supported by the YHA Bushwalking club.

Autumn Trip Reports - Easter Great Ocean Walk

Every year, the club tries to bring you an accommodated Easter weekend where you can do some more challenging day walks in spectacular scenery while staying in comfy accommodation with a house party atmosphere every night. With three weeks to go until Easter, I decided to see if I could put together such a trip, and after much trawling through websites and phone calls, I eventually found a lodge in Lavers Hill that could fit twelve with an overflow option of camping nearby. So with two weeks to go, the lodge was booked, walks were planned, and an email was sent to the YHA Bushwalking list. It was a relief to fill the lodge and have a few people camping behind the pub.

The Lavers Lodge was well equipped because it is used as a family house when there are no paying guests. I would recommend it to anyone else planning an accommodated trip to the Otways or Great Ocean Walk (GOW). We had use of a full kitchen, DVD, video, Foxtel, free internet; the only complaints seem to be about the other YHA members' nocturnal noises- with eight bunks in one room everyone found out who snores and who tosses and turns!

Paul Gottliebsen previously led a pack carry covering the whole Great Ocean Walk over three weekends, and his recommendations guided the choice of walks. We managed to cover about 70 km of the total 91 km of the GOW by splitting it up into four day walks, and doing car shuffles.

The first day's walk was from Wreck Beach to the official end of the GOW at Glenample Homestead, and we soon found out that with two hours to go until high tide, crossing Wreck Beach was going to involve some running in between waves.



(Historic anchor, Wreck Beach)

One thing to remember when planning walks on the Great Ocean walk is that there are a number of Tidal Decision Points. These are places where the path crosses narrow beaches and you must time your crossing to coincide with low tide or take a duller inland alternative.

It was worth getting wet feet to see the anchors from 19th century shipwrecks. After the race past the beach, we could relax and there was time for a pub / cafe stop at Princetown, conveniently situated a short diversion off the main track. The GOW strangely stops about 2km short of the Twelve Apostles but about half the walkers carried on by car to see them and also huge waves at Loch Ard Gorge. Dinner at the Port Campbell hotel was excellent - huge portions, reasonable prices and fancier than most country pubs.



(Melanesia beach – all photos Chris Marney)

The Saturday walk was the longest at around 21 km from Moonlight Head to Johanna Beach. We were blessed with perfect walking weather - around 23°C and cloudless skies, which meant for great views especially from the clifftop at Ryans Den campsite. Again, it was a bit of a race to beat high tide at Melanesia Beach, but the beach was much wider than Wreck Beach, and no-one got wet apart from the few who braved a lunch time swim.

One thing to note is that the official GOW runs east to west, and is only signposted in that direction, so it was easier to get lost when travelling in the west - east direction. It's also very easy to get lost if you decide to speed on ahead and forget to wait for the rest of group at junctions, and this lesson should be remembered by all those attending this walk (or any other).

Sunday's walk started on the beach at Marengo, near Apollo Bay. We managed to get most of the way to Shelly Beach on the rocky shelves and beach, but were forced onto the inland track about one kilometre short of Shelly Beach. It looks like that section is one that you really need to negotiate at low tide. Lunch was going to be at Shelly Beach but was interrupted by the only rain on the walk, so we slogged up a steep hill to the shelter at Elliot Ridge

I had promised everyone the chance to see koalas in the wild, but after walking through forest most of the afternoon and only about ten minutes to go to the cars, they were proving elusive. I kept optimistic and soon enough we saw one, then another and before we reached the cars, seventeen koalas had been spotted in about 300 metres. For koala enthusiasts, I'll reveal the exact location

**Easter Great Ocean Walk (cont'd)**

where multiple sightings are very likely - the Blanket Bay road at the gated bridge where it crosses the Parker River. The wait for the drivers to collect the cars was punctuated by ever-loudening rumbles of thunder but thankfully the storm held off until the drive back. We saw plenty of lightning strikes near Castle Cove, some of which started bushfires that quickly took hold in the parched vegetation. We pulled into the nearest house to raise the alarm and they called the CFA who we saw charging to the scene several minutes later. After dinner at the Lavers Hill pub, the sky had cleared and few of the more adventurous walkers did a night hike under a full moon to see the glow worms at nearby Melba Gully.



Easter Monday saw many people make an early retreat back to Melbourne which was a shame as they missed a very scenic walk from Johanna beach to Aire River via Castle Cove. The path goes along ledges between the cliff and the beach so there were some great coastal views which looked quite moody from sea mist.

We stopped off at the Castle Cove cafe for lunch which proved to be an entertaining experience as it was run by a true Aussie character who spent more time chatting with customers than preparing food or drinks.

One of our group, after waiting politely to be served while the owner espoused his philosophy, was greeted with "You're a patient bastard, aren't you !". The food that eventually arrived was excellent but don't go to this place if you not prepared for a unique attitude towards customer service, and a long but very enjoyable wait.



*(Survivors relax at Aire River)*

The walk finished at Aire River and we had about five minutes to relax before I suggested that we should return to the cars to beat the oncoming storm. Luckily the heavy rain didn't start until we just got into the cars. If you'd like to see or download all of my photos from this walk, then please follow this link:

[http://www.kodakgallery.com/I.jsp?c=du5m2fh.c7sw8q3d&x=0&y=-w8e4ia&localeid=en\\_US](http://www.kodakgallery.com/I.jsp?c=du5m2fh.c7sw8q3d&x=0&y=-w8e4ia&localeid=en_US)

and press the view slideshow button without signing in.

*Chris Marney*

**Anzac weekend at Tallangatta**

The Anzac Day weekend saw the use of Tallangatta as the base for an accommodated weekend for the first time in at least a decade or two, if not ever. We stayed in cabins at the caravan park, which in better years is right on the shore of the Hume Weir, but right now the closest water was two small pools a few hundred metres away on the lake bed.

Anzac Day featured a 14km return walk to Flaggy Creek Gorge in Mt Lawson state park. Views of the Murray Valley on what would otherwise have been a perfect autumn day were somewhat obscured by a smoke haze from controlled burning across most of northeast Victoria. We arrived at the gorge at lunchtime, with an hour allocated to either laze by the rockpools or do a bit of exploring. Flaggy Creek wasn't running, but there were still numerous pools all the way down the gorge. The peak time for this area is early spring, with plentiful water and wildflowers, but sadly no long weekends.

Saturday's walk was a climb to the summit of Pine Mountain, a bit of a drive from Tallangatta, but worth it for the views. The weather forecast suggested rain in the afternoon, so it was a very pleasant surprise when the morning cloud actually cleared for some basking in the sunshine on one of the rock slopes near Pine Mountain.



*Descending from Pine Mountain*

The rain eventually arrived on Sunday morning. Unsurprisingly, few were keen to walk so a short hike to the summit of Mt Granya was called off.

Tallangatta has a choice of two pubs, which is fortunate as one wasn't very good – the group climbed more than half way up Pine Mountain in less than the time taken to serve our meals. An alternative to consider for a similar weekend in the future is to base it in Walwa, a small but attractive town on the banks of the upper Murray. It would be a longer drive on the first night, but is more central to the walks, and still has the basic facilities of a pub, camping ground and general store.

Burrowa-Pine Mountain NP is also worth considering for overnight walk ideas during the September-October months, as it could provide some challenging and scenic walks during the period that access to much of the Alpine NP is still closed.

*Stephen Smith*

The Last Trekker in Mandalay

No matter how well organised an overseas trip is, there are always things beyond your control that can crop up at the last minute and throw everything into disarray in an instant. So it was with the two and a half months solo travelling through south east Asia that I'd spent six months researching and planning. A week or so before I was due to leave for Myanmar (Burma) in October 2007, civil unrest broke out, making world news, especially when a Japanese tourist was killed in the crossfire. All my friends and family strongly urged me not to go, but as the days to my scheduled departure rapidly counted down, I couldn't make up my mind what to do. I couldn't sleep much for the final three days. Eventually, in a sleep-deprived haze I browsed the internet for whatever I could find about the latest situation, concluded it wasn't as bad as it had been made out and made the big decision – Just Do It!. Before settling in Australia, I'd been through the Chinese Cultural Revolution and felt that with a bit of common sense and keeping my head down, I could handle the situation in Myanmar.

And so I found myself in Bangkok airport waiting to board the Air Asia flight to Yangon (Rangoon). For what would normally have been peak season, there weren't many passengers – many fewer and the flight would have been cancelled. Only one was an obvious tourist – a diehard German and evidently a keen Christian, as he seemed to spend most of the flight praying.

On arrival at Yangon the conditions were cloudy, raining and humid – in short miserable. The primitive 1960's style airport hardly seemed very welcoming, but once disembarked, things began to brighten up. I'd expected to be met by a cordon of armed soldiers, but they were nowhere to be seen, just beautiful smiling women also known as customs officials who treated tourists as though they were an endangered species. I'd seen advice about not bringing in mobile phones, laptops or cameras for fear of being labelled a spy, but I took my beloved digital camera anyway and didn't experience any problems with it or the \$4000 in US currency I took in to fund my travels.

At the hotel the staff tried their best to put on a show that there were no problems, but it was clear they were worried about something but didn't want to say too much. To get a truthful account of the situation, I went to Chinatown and met with some of the local Chinese population. They advised I shouldn't have any problems as long as I didn't talk politics or get caught up in any protests. If things deteriorated and the airport closed, they had a network that could smuggle me into China or Thailand within days. From here onwards I had peace of mind, and was able to enjoy sightseeing and in a country that I virtually had to myself.

It was time to do some trekking. A popular attraction is Golden Rock (right), a precariously balanced boulder atop Mt Kyaiktyo on the coast north east of Yangon.

Supposedly marking the site of a Buddha hair, most people get to Golden Rock by piling in with hundreds of others into the back of a pickup truck, but I wanted to do the 11 kilometre, 1200m climb on foot!



The locals couldn't believe I wanted to walk up the mountain – “only a young man or crazy person does it that way” they exclaimed. I'm a few decades past my teenage years, so I've no doubt which category they put me in, thinking I was doing it was just to save the 50c fare. With a 6am start, I made it to the top in 3.5 hours, well ahead of the guidebook 4-6 hour estimate.

From there it was on to the Shan Plateau, an elevated (1300m) region occupying the area bounded by the northern Thai and southern Chinese borders. Its relatively cool climate and mountain scenery have made this a (normally) very popular region for trekkers. I started at Kalaw, a main centre for treks in the region, hiring a local guide and embarking on a two-day 50 kilometre trek through pine-forest covered mountains and numerous villages. I was the only tourist out on the track; on the rare occasions that I ran into other tourists in one of the towns, there was a feeling like seeing a long-lost brother. I trekked in sandals and shorts, but while relaxing around town I

**The Last Trekker in Mandalay (cont'd)**

went native and learned how to walk around in a *longi* (sarong). From there, the next level up was wearing it cycling, something I wasn't quite as proficient at; on one occasion I discovered it was coming loose and, not having any underwear beneath it, had to get off the bicycle very carefully in order to maintain my modesty and retie it.



The highlight was organising my own trek at Inle Lake, 22km long but very shallow, so much so that as well as villages surrounding it, there are even a few on the lake. I was slightly wary, as the only information I had was a handwritten sketch map drawn for me by one of the locals. I managed to find my way about fairly well for the first half of the day, then amidst the rice fields I arrived at an intersection not shown on my map. The only person in sight was a man carrying a load of wood back to his village. As I got closer to him, more details became apparent – the machete slung on his side, fearsome tattoos over much of his body, teeth darkened almost to black through constant chewing of betel nut – basically very tough looking and someone you'd be very careful not to antagonise. He didn't speak a word of English or Chinese; I pointed at the map, indicating where I wanted to get to, but (like many Sunday walkers!), his map reading skills weren't much to write home about either, and all he could do was stare at me with a deadpan expression. I was beginning to get nervous, realising that I had a few thousand dollars concealed about me; with an average monthly income of \$60, if he decided to do me harm he'd be able to take a very long holiday. He gestured me to follow. Deciding to trust him, but keeping a slight distance just in case he tried to attack me, I trailed along as he led me to a small forest not shown on the map.



*(Views of Inle Lake – all photos: Robert Yuen)*

Eventually we arrived at his village, then into his house for a cup of tea. He showed me how to get back to the main town via another village that was on the map – a 20km trek with some very bushy sections that called out for some serious scrub-bashing. I made it back safely in the end, enriched by the experience, learning once again not to judge people at face value.



**My Fair Lady:** *On the boat from Mandalay to Bagan, this woman approached and tried to sell me bananas. She was very persistent and despite using all my accomplished bargaining skills, she wouldn't budge from the 'tourist' price which I knew to be four times what the locals pay. I eventually gave in and paid \$1/kg for some very good bananas. She was very friendly throughout, but wouldn't smile to avoid showing her betel-blackened teeth.*

Last night I dreamt I went to Mandalay again. It's been six months since I left Myanmar, moving on after 26 days to some comparably scenic but less dramatic backpacking in Laos and Cambodia, but I miss this beautiful country and its stunning tropical landscapes. The people were very friendly, despite their country's problems, with an innocence due to lack of contact with the outside world. The men aren't exactly handsome (although you shouldn't judge by appearances!), yet the women with their blend of Chinese-Indian-European features are breathtakingly beautiful. The infrastructure is very poor, but the hotels and hostels I stayed at were acceptable and costs very cheap – only \$1 for a good meal. Independent travel wasn't difficult, but I'd only recommend it to anyone with experience in other southeast Asian countries first. Politics are a very sensitive subject, and while many Westerners are likely to have strong views on Myanmar's situation, it is prudent not to get involved in any political discussions whilst in the country. Enjoy its hospitality, hopefully there will come a day soon when its attractions are able to be more widely experienced.

**Robert Yuen**

## A Wander along the Western Arthurs

### *Breaking Down the First Barrier*

Boxing Day in Tasmania was sunny as six of us started our journey from Hobart towards a ten-day walk in the Western Arthurs. It stayed sunny in New Norfolk, as we stopped for a final feed of fresh fruit, hot pies and other luxuries we wouldn't have room for in our packs, but once past the sign to the South West National Park, it was as though we'd crossed a barrier trapping a pocket of wet, windy weather whilst keeping out the sunshine that everywhere else was basking in. The rain squalls that lashed our mini-bus with increasing frequency as we neared the start of the walk did little to dispel that impression. A few kilometres into the walk the dark grey ridgeline of our goal came into view. Tales are legion of parties of bushwalkers (usually mainlanders) venturing into the Western Arthurs only to abandon and flee in despair days later without having got much beyond the first peak. How would we fare? As it turned out, the weather barrier had already started to disintegrate and would lie in ruins for the duration of our walk. That still didn't mean it would be easy...

It rained steadily throughout the first night, but cleared by morning, leaving a legacy of swollen creeks. The ladders each side of Junction Creek, which luckily we'd crossed the previous day, were almost fully submerged. We couldn't escape another creek crossing however; what would normally have been barely noticeable was instead waist deep, ensuring we quickly conformed to the SW Tasmanian dress code of saturated boots. After a short splash across the muddy plains, we soon reached the start of the 600m climb up the tumble of rocks known as Moraine A. Steadily we rose, looking back across the Arthur Plains, scorched by a bushfire ten months earlier, the view gradually opening up back to the car park and Lake Pedder. Reaching the top was entering a different world, arriving at a grassy moor with views of the rugged Arthur Range in the direction we would be heading over the next week, as well as south towards Bathurst Harbour and the coast.

### *Entering an Earthbound Universe*

The peaks of the Western Arthurs are dramatic enough by themselves, but what makes the region extra special are the myriad glacial lakes nestled amidst the folds of its ridges. Only one feature has been given a name that suggests the suffering involved in reaching it – everywhere else the beauty of the landscape captured the imagination of the first explorers more than its hardships, resulting (with one or two exceptions) in the peaks being named after constellations and the lakes after planets or moons. Thus we soon found ourselves atop Mt Hesperus gazing down at Lakes Neptune and Pluto.

Our goal that night was Lake Oberon, but progress had been a bit slower than expected. Chris had been using both of his trekking poles, but on the narrow rocky track they were more hindrance than help. He was persuaded to use just one pole on the subsequent days, enabling him to move at the same pace as the rest of the group without sacrificing stability. On this day however it was 5.30pm and we'd only made it as far as Square Lake. While scenic, it didn't offer much in the way of comfortable campsites, so we decided to push on to Lake Oberon, despite the risk of arriving late and finding its good but limited campsites being fully occupied.

A steep climb out of Square Lake brought us to the iconic vista looking down on Lake Oberon, made famous in countless wilderness calendars. Peter Dombrovskis brought this area to the attention of the world with one of his best known photographs framing the lake between two large pandani. He couldn't have been trying too hard as it didn't take much looking around to cram in about a dozen of the plants and still leave room in the photo for the lake (*below*).



There was still a descent to manage, one that wasn't very friendly to a tired party of bushwalkers this late in the day. A steep, slippery rock chute required a painstaking descent with a full pack. The timber walkway over a gully at the end at first seemed welcoming, but even that was a challenge, as overhanging pandani forced us to lean sideways to get past them; only a slight lean, but enough to feel unsteady with a full pack. It wasn't until after 7.30pm when the last of us arrived, to the surprising revelation that we were the only group there. Two others arrived just before 9pm, but we had the pick of the camping platforms.

The weather remained fine the following day, but Paul decided to make it a rest day, as the campsites were comfortable and some in the group badly needed to recuperate from the previous day's exertion. A side trip back the way we'd come to the summits of Mt Sirius and Mt Orion proved very worthwhile. Without the burden of 25kg packs, we bolted up and down the climb that seemed so tricky the previous evening. The horde we'd missed out on the previous night arrived a day later, a total of 17 people, forcing a few to find rough campsites away from the platforms. None of the next few sites would have a lot of tent spaces either, and apart from those we knew about, there was the unknown factor of parties coming from the opposite direction, so with the advantage of being well rested, we set off well ahead of the pack at 7.30am. It was a clear sky as we left, out of the blue (literally) came thirty seconds of hail, ceasing as abruptly as it started. It may have been a preview of a full length feature in 2008, but for us it was the final bit of precipitation for the trip.

The Western Arthurs is arguably the hardest tracked walk in Australia, and the next two days were to be the hardest sections. There wasn't a particular part that stood out from the rest as particularly gruelling, it was a series of steep climbs and descents, with precious few sections where legs

## A Wander along the Western Arthurs (cont'd)

alone were sufficient to move forward. We were assisted by Sandra, who'd led a trip part-way along the same route several months earlier only to have it cut short by the bushfires. Her foreknowledge of what lay around each corner, or over each ledge, was handy, as was the reassurance that the earlier expedition had been handicapped by a few dodgy knees and various other ailments, yet they'd all made it through (eventually), so no matter how daunting some sections looked or sounded, we could do it too. By the way Sandra bounded along at twice the pace of everyone else (except Paul), she certainly remembered every step or handhold of the way.

### **No Country for Old Pants**

*A lotta folks are in two minds 'bout whether to wear old or new clothing in this sorta country, what with all that scrapin' over rocks and straining of seams. A word of advice – you need all the healthy stitches you can git. Any that ain't up to it and you sure as hell got yourself a rip the size of Texas. And if it's the seat of your pants that goes badass, make sure you ain't walking commando.*

Clothing took most of the punishment for the parts it covered, but a few layers of skin were sanded from our hands through the endless grasping of rocks or branches to lower ourselves down the steep track. Some sections had too big a drop, or were too confined to confidently negotiate wearing a pack, so out came the pack-hauling rope. It was looped around the shoulder straps then the packs gently lowered down – at least that was the theory, some weren't as gentle as planned.

At the aptly named Tilted Chasm, Sandra's pack kept tumbling down the chasm after the rope was released. Fortunately her indestructible mung bean containers stashed in the outer pockets survived, unlike Russell's water bottle which cracked in half after his pack had a Garuda-class landing. Sandra was in the firing line again later on, narrowly missing being speared by Genevieve's pole after it accidentally came loose. Still practice makes perfect, so a couple of days later we'd well and truly got the knack for what would be the final pack-haul down to Lake Sirona.



Something else that took a few days to get used to were the Arthurs-style porta-loos, designed more for ease of airlifting by helicopter than ease of use. The first reaction on seeing them was disbelief – “surely I can't be expected to use it

like that...?” - and checking that there wasn't a more conventional dunny (like with a seat) hidden away further in the bush. They are probably intended as a test – none of your namby-pamby equal opportunity disability access here; anyone not flexible enough to perch on one of these things shouldn't be within coo-ee of the Western Arthurs.

After Haven Lake (day 5) the walking became noticeably easier; there was still a bit of clambering, but many more open, flat sections. An easy side-trip up to the summit of Mt Scorpio gave us some of the best views of the trip, with the sight of three lakes (Juno, Vesta and Promontory) aligned in the next valley being hard to beat.

Our routine of early starts was paying dividends, as we tended to arrive in camp early afternoon well ahead of anyone else (although there were six of us, we were moving faster than the smaller groups), leaving plenty of time to set up camp and relax with a swim, a bit of sewing up torn clothing or exploring the nearby views. The days didn't feel as long, even though on one of them it had taken us seven hours to complete 3.5km.

### **Lunch at the “Slug and Lettuce”**

We thought we'd arrive at Promontory Lake camp for lunch, but encountering some thick scrub, an ill-defined track and a well-defined tiger snake made Paul decide to stop about half an hour short. It was here that a stowaway was exposed who'd been hitching a ride for the past six days. Enjoying an amazingly fresh looking salad with her lunch each day, Genevieve unfurled yet another cos lettuce leaf only to discover a slug with a taste for more than just travel had got there first. A week of happily chewing and pooing through a salad bar came to an abrupt end when it was flung into the wilderness without even a farewell kiss. Kenton was starving by this stage, having been attempting to get by on 400g of food a day but, unable to break his vows of vegetarianism, passed up the chance of a protein supplement.

After reaching Promontory Lake and setting up camp, it had become noticeably warm, probably not more than the high twenties, but uncomfortable in the direct sun without any shade. Southwest Tasmania is better known for its tempestuous weather, so it seemed strange, even churlish, to complain about the heat, yet despite a refreshing swim in the cold lake water, the rest of the afternoon was spent laying around waiting for the shadows to lengthen, thankful for brief moments of cloud cover. Thanks to a high peak on the eastern side of the lake, the sun disappeared for good a few hours before sunset, marking the beginning of New Year's Eve celebrations. Everyone had brought along something to share, with Genevieve's effort of carrying three quarters of a litre of raspberry-infused vodka for the best part of a week being the most outstanding (and she blamed the poor slug for making her pack feel heavy!).

During the night we were awoken by lightning and distant thunder that fortunately didn't get any nearer, as the campsite on the bare hillside felt very exposed.

The weather change wasn't accompanied by any rain, however the New Year began somewhat cooler than the previous one had ended. The views were gone, swallowed

## A Wander along the Western Arthurs (cont'd)

by an Arthurian mist which enshrouded the peaks and cut visibility to less than a hundred metres. Hazy rock outlines loomed into view, but only as we walked right next to them. The Western Arthurs track had been very prominent – until this section out of Promontory Lake where it temporarily disappeared. Paul earned his money (the rate we pay all our leaders!) navigating through the near whiteout until reaching the better-defined Centaurus Ridge.

### *A Portal to Las Vegas*

The day's highlight was supposed to be a side-trip to the West Portal, the highest point of the Western Arthurs. Around midday we reached the turnoff point – nothing was visible, but the track had ceased climbing and changed direction. As there wasn't expected to be a view, Chris decided to stay behind and mind the packs while the rest of us set off uphill, for ten minutes or so of rock scrambling. There wasn't a marked trail, we simply carried on until we couldn't see any rocky silhouettes higher up. After commemorating our achievement with a group photo in the whiteout, we set off back the way we'd come. Or at least the way we thought we'd come. The route downhill soon looked unfamiliar from the way we'd come up. The main track only touched one side of the peak, so we couldn't rely on simply descending until we reached it. Realising we'd probably come down too far west, we changed course but also called out to Chris. Not hearing any response, we were getting worried about being a long way off course when suddenly the packs appeared through the mist – with Chris asleep next to them. He was dreaming he was in Las Vegas and heard us shouting out through his slumber, but was unable to raise himself to a high enough level of consciousness (ie drag himself away from the showgirls) to do anything useful like calling back.

### *Back Down to Earth*

This was the beginning of the end of the Western Arthurs traverse, from here on it was downhill towards the Arthur Plains. The mist appeared to clear mid-afternoon, but it hadn't really – we'd descended below the clouds, but the peaks behind us were still hidden. Escape wasn't easy – we had to go push through thick head-high scrub for half an hour. There was still a track, although this was a track by Tasmanian standards – in any other state it would have been called a scrub bash. Without the "track" it would have been impenetrable.

Lake Rosanne was the last of the Western Arthurs lakes; what would normally have been a pleasant campsite was now largely burnt out. The clouds lifted by the following morning, allowing a view back to the towering Western Portal before completing the relatively easy descent to the Arthur Plains. Everyone had their fair share of scratches and bruises from the main traverse, but despite looking like the walking wounded there were no major injuries. And so, with the most hazardous part of the walk completed, Chris rolled his ankle just as we reached Lake Rosanne. The irony was compounded by the accident occurring on a bit of track he didn't even need to be on, as the person at the front with him had gone past the turnoff to the campsite. With the aid of some prescription painkillers and the return to active service of his second pole, Chris was able to hobble

back along the long but predominantly flat remainder of the walk. Paul went one better – he completed the entire walk unscathed only to seriously sprain his ankle ligament at home a couple of weeks later, rendering him incapable of any sort of movement other than Sunday walks.

For those who equate distance with length, the next day was the longest day, 19 kilometres along the Arthur Plains back to Junction Creek, accomplishing in 7 hours on the flat what had taken seven long days to do via the scenic route, rewinding peak by peak the efforts of the previous week.



*Early morning on the Arthur Plains: (photo Genevieve Avery)*

The Arthur Plains were an easier walk than normal. What can be a marathon bog-slog was instead a tramp across plains parched through a combination of no rain in over a week and the bushfire-destroyed ground cover. Instead of getting muddy however, we got very sooty through brushing past the scorched vegetation, ending up looking like we'd come through a war zone by the time we reached Junction Creek. Eight days earlier the creek had covered the ladder at the crossing, now all but the bottom rung was exposed, but there were a few pools deep enough to wash off the day's grime.

The remainder of the walk to the carpark was a formality, although a contrast to the damp and muddy walk in. The loosening and dislodging of a number of planks on the boardwalk was a sign of how prolonged the dry spell was for this region.

Some of us began missing the Western Arthurs as soon as we reached the plains. The trek along them took a long time to cover short distances, engendering a few curses in the process, yet the ten days passed quickly. The benign weather and plenty of leisure time allowed us to fully appreciate the majestic environment. The Western Arthurs is one of the highlights of Australian bushwalking, an experience anyone seriously interested in real wilderness shouldn't miss. Anyone contemplating it should have already done several extended walks (greater than 1 week) beforehand, preferably at least one elsewhere in Tasmania. It doesn't appear frequently on our bushwalking programme (once or twice a decade), but your planning and preparation for the "next time" may need to start now.

*(There may be a shortened version (5-day) Western Arthurs trip, only going as far as Lake Oberon, on Melbourne Cup weekend, check the spring programme for further details).*

## In Profile - Tom Lun

*New committee member Tom Lun shares a few of his thoughts about the club and his experiences since he joined it. Other new committee members will feature in the Spring edition.*

### How long have you been with YHA bushwalking?

I started with the club nearly three years ago. My very first trip with the club was in August 2005, going up Mt Feathertop in the snow. That was a lot of fun and I have been doing it every year since.

**What attracted you to us in the first place?** The club has a relatively young group of walkers with an adventurous spirit compared to other clubs. Having said that, I also enjoy walking with a number of very experienced leaders who are happy to share their extensive knowledge.

None of the other clubs can offer challenging trips like this club such as all the snow camping trips. I can't see how the other clubs can get me pushing through deep snow along the Overland Trail in winter or climbing on steep rock faces on the Helicopter Spur with a full pack!!!

**Favourite walk so far?** It's hard to pick THE favourite. I like all the snow camping trips every winter. If I have to pick one, I would say Kosciuszko National Park walk from Kiandra to Thredbo, Christmas 2005 for the spectacular campsites and wildflower displays. (PSSTT...I'm trying to get a free dinner from the YETI editor who lead that walk....) (*no worries – a McDonalds voucher is on its way - Ed*) For pure adventure, nothing beats Overland Trail in winter with Bruce during the winter of 2007.

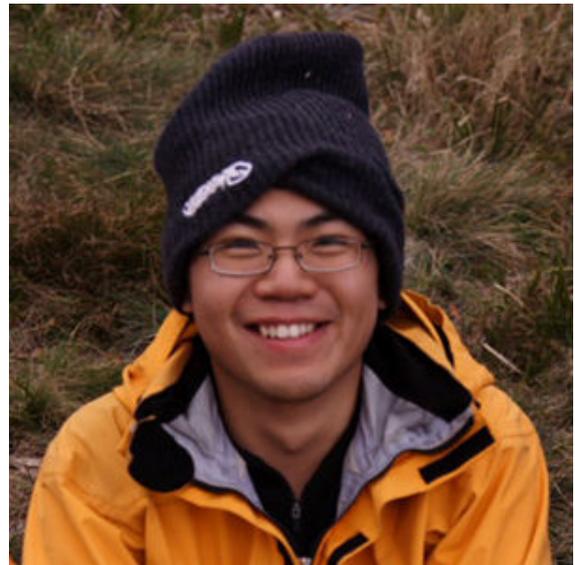
**Experience you'd least like to repeat?** Getting hypothermia on the Overland Trail wasn't funny. Although every time I talk to people about it, I can't help but laugh at my own stupidity and misery... At one stage, I thought I wasn't able to move my limbs because I was so exhausted!

**Funniest moment?** On the Wilsons Prom trip in 2006 at Roaring Meg campsite, a bird took snatched my zip lock bag of sultanas while I wasn't looking and flew over the entire campsite. A lot of people were looking (and laughing) at me chasing after the bird with the bag in its beak. When I finally caught up after getting sighting reports from other campers, all that was left was the torn zip lock bag... Once I got back to the tent, I found that the bird came back while I was away and snatched the nuts as well...

**Favourite bush tucker?** I used to bring just instant noodles or freeze dried food on trips when I first started pack carry trips. Over the last few years, I've realised that going camping doesn't mean having Maggi three-minute noodles for dinner. If it's a weekend trip in winter, I can bring pretty much anything I want. My favourite is smoked salmon for dinner and Lindt dark chocolate on the trail.

I'm going to try bringing sashimi and sushi from my favourite Japanese restaurant as well as fresh oysters (with shells) from Victoria Market this winter to Federation Hut if I can organise it. It would be so nice!!! I'm also contemplating whether to get a lexen plunger for my morning coffee...

**Strangest thing you've seen on a walk?** The strangest thing I've seen was Pine Valley turning into Pine Ocean within 12 hours of heavy rain when we did the Overland Trail walk in winter.



I always find it strange that I eat four times as much as other people...

**What places haven't you been to that you'd most like to visit?** I always wanted to visit New Zealand at some stage. I've heard lots about the Milford, Routeburn, Dusky, etc. and how beautiful these places are.

I had a great time trekking in Nepal doing the Langtang-Gosainkund trek in 2006 so I would like to go back and do the Annapurna Circuit or the Everest Base Camp trek.

**In what ways do you think the club can be improved?** We need to develop the next generation of trip leaders by giving them training on navigation, first-aid, etc. It is always difficult for the Walk Secretaries to find enough people to lead walks.



*Tom equipped for just about anything on the Alpine Walking track Kiandra-Thredbo walk.*

## How to beat the Cold this Winter

Are you one of those people that feels the cold and does this put you off doing outdoor activities during the winter months? Or maybe you'd like to venture into the snow but can't afford the outlay needed on down jackets, fleeces, windstoppers, goretex gloves etc. Perhaps a few tips from self-proclaimed "Iceman" Wim Hof (below) may help you break away from the fireplace.



The 49 year old Dutchman's claim to fame has been various feats of endurance in freezing conditions, the most notorious being an attempt in 2007 to climb Mt Everest. The late and genuinely great Sir Edmund Hillary made it to the summit with clothes and oxygen; Dutchman Wim's lightweight "expedition" was done wearing only a pair of shorts and sandals. He only made it as far as 7400m, although it was a foot injury that defeated him, not the temperature. According to Wim, the cold didn't affect any of his extremities "*the natural protection of the penis is that it contracts itself. It just goes in, like a fishing rod.*"

Wim is attempting to hook and reel in people to his mind-over-body technique "inner fire" whereby in response to cold conditions the heart rate decreases and core temperature increases, the opposite to what occurs in most of the general population. His website [www.innerfire.nl/en](http://www.innerfire.nl/en) unfortunately sheds little light on the secrets behind this technique, as an attempted translation to English has ended up as Double-Dutch, however its origins are believed to be based on the Himalayan yogic practice of Tummo. An alternative scientific explanation is that in cold conditions, over half of the body's efforts are devoted to maintaining the temperature of the brain, but maybe Wim's central heating requirements are much less than the rest of us?

**Next Issue:** *DJ Scrub Basha is back. Many of you have expressed appreciation for how his advice last "Yeti" has made bushwalking more enjoyable. Now the first man to combine bushwalking with style will offer fashion advice for walkers. The DJ was due to provide a column this issue, but the recent death of Albert Hofmann sent him into a period of extended mourning, so unfortunately he missed the publication deadline.*

## Dear Dr Telemark

*Yeti's original lifestyle coach is still around, available to advise with delicacy and sensitivity on any personal difficulties you may be having with life in the great outdoors.*



Dear Dr T,

*Please help me out here. I'm a firm believer in carrying as light a load as possible on an extended bushwalk. This doesn't just include what I carry in my backpack, but the clothes I wear as well – they are all part of the load my body has to bear. Anyway, I read on the internet that women's underpants are about 85g lighter than men's so I thought I'd try walking in them instead. It wasn't too difficult buying a pair the right size – I simply told the shop assistant they were a present for my girlfriend, who happened to be an ex-Russian weightlifter, and hence was about the same size as me, so could I try them on please. And dammit if they weren't comfortable – so silky, so smooth, an absolute treat for my gonads, yet they actually made me feel for the first time that I was walking like a man, especially the lacy red ones.*

*I didn't let on to my fellow walkers, but my secret became known when on an extended walk I decided after about a week that it was time to wash my undergarment and inadvertently left it drying on top of my tent. Instead of admiring my ingenuity, I was ridiculed and made to think that I was weird. Please Dr T, as a lightweight aficionado yourself, tell me I'm not alone.*

Yours sincerely,  
Petticoat Sam (trailblazer)

Dear PS,

So you've discovered one of my little secrets as well. Of course lightweight clothing is more than just underwear. I recently completed the South Coast track wearing a black satin negligee. And don't forget footwear. Leather boots weigh a ton, goretex ones are a bit of an improvement, but for warmth,, comfort and weighing next to nothing, I can't go past my favourite pair of pink fluffy slippers. So ignore the taunts of those who continue to source their outdoor clothing from the mens racks at Kathmandu instead of the Myer lingerie counter. But just be careful – there are a few lightweight bushwalking ideas that don't work. Take my words of experience:

- No toothbrush and toothpaste; I tried this on a ten-day walk, but found the furry growth on my teeth ended up weighing more than the 50g I'd "saved".

- No sunscreen; the pustules of fluid that oozed from the second degree burns I acquired during an unseasonally long fine spell weighed more than a tube of factor 30+.

- No sunglasses; seemed to work at first, but I soon became unable to see the little things such as the insects that attached themselves to me, the mud that caked my boots and the strange objects the others in the group placed inside my pack that I ended up carrying more after all.

**Take care out there.**  
**Dr. T**

## Coming Attractions

### Grampians base-camp (cont'd from p1)

On Sunday morning, we leave the Campground at 9.30am, for a short drive to the start of today's walk to Briggs Bluff. After a short walk from the car park through open forest to Beehive Falls, the trail then begins to ascend steeply, passing the second water fall onto the first plateau. From this section, it will involve scrambling and climbing over fallen trees, boulders and scrubs. Take care in this area as rocks can be slippery and loose. On top of Briggs Bluff is a spectacular view over the Western Victoria plains of the Northern Grampians.

The choice is yours to depart the Grampians on Sunday night or Monday morning, returning to Melbourne in your own time.

Enquiries: Sharon Saing 0400 009 018

### Fraser Island - November 2-9<sup>th</sup>



Located 200km north of Brisbane, the World Heritage listed Fraser Island is the world's largest sand island. It offers much more scenery however than just sand dunes; giant stands of rainforest, mangrove forest, rainbow coloured gorges and cliffs. The most impressive features are the more than 40 freshwater dune lakes, each with their own unique shape and colour.

In November Sing Wong will be running a four day pack-carry in the southern section of Fraser Island, plus some shorter walks. The trip will start on Sunday Nov 2<sup>nd</sup> from the Gold Coast; participants will need to make their own arrangements to either fly or drive to Coolangatta. Depending on what vehicles are available (Sing will be able to take two in his), from Coolangatta it will be a combination of car-pooling or car hire for the drive up the coast.

The approximate itinerary is to catch the ferry to Fraser Island from Inskip Point, then embark on a circuit visiting Central Station, several lakes including a campsite at Lake McKenzie and Dilli Village. This will be followed by camping in Cooloola NP then two days walking in Moreton Island before returning to Coolangatta on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup>. There is also an option for a limited number to spend an extra week with Sing driving back to Melbourne, with stopovers in the Lamington or Warrumbungles National Parks.

Enquiries: Sing Wong ([singaroo@hotmail.com](mailto:singaroo@hotmail.com)) or 0427 192 572 - no phone enquiries after Oct 1<sup>st</sup>)

### Two new Sunday walk routes

With almost fifty Sunday walks scheduled each year, it seems at times that the same basic group of walks appear quite frequently, particularly when many are chosen from the same pool of currently in-print guidebooks.

Those looking for something a bit different will be pleased that two of the club's most experienced leaders, Ron Bell and Les Gamel have done a bit of exploring and come up with walks that either feature an entirely new track or take the roads less travelled to form a "new" route that hasn't been featured on any YHA walks within living memory.

Ron's walk on June 15<sup>th</sup> features a new track from the centre of Blackwood to the Garden of St Erth. The track was recently developed by the Blackwood community and passes through the scenic German Gully, featuring some stands of giant tree ferns. The walk is a 10km "easy-medium" grading, with the option of either walking back from St Erth via the road (4km) or waiting to get picked up by car.

On August 17<sup>th</sup>, Les will be taking an alternate route between Upper Ferntree Gully and Belgrave. The usual way walks in this area have been run recently, via the 1000 Steps, often means bumping into hundreds of others out for their Sunday exercise. The theme of this walk is to take the quietest and least used tracks and laneways; the result finds the walker in very attractive bushland providing a feeling of remoteness uncharacteristic for an area so close to Melbourne.

Expect the walk to start at 10.30 at the Upper Ferntree Gully Railway car park next to the Sunday Market. Total distance is 15km with a few hills, graded "easy-medium".

### Treasure Hunt - August 24<sup>th</sup>



The Sunday walk on August 24<sup>th</sup> will be a Treasure Hunt, a fun exercise to try out your basic navigation skills and maybe win a few prizes. The group will be divided into teams of 3-4, with the aim to locate markers giving clues as to the location of the prizes. Most of the markers will be close to a track, in fairly open country, so there isn't any need to go scrub bashing (unless you are really keen). If you haven't done much navigation practice before, here's a chance to learn - we will try to ensure that novice navigators are put in a group with more experienced ones. There will also be a few helpers roaming about offering general assistance. All teams will be issued with maps; some compasses will also be available, however it is preferred that anyone who has one brings it along. Those wanting to learn a bit about navigation beforehand can either contact the organiser to email them some notes or (to be confirmed) attend the clubnight immediately beforehand for a briefing.

Enquiries: Stephen Smith 9387 6481.